

Remarks by Secretary of State Beth Chapman as prepared.

Press Conference

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Many of you are probably looking up here today and seeing three of the state's highest-ranking gentlemen - both Republicans and Democrats standing in agreement with me on an issue and you may well be thinking the world is coming to an end. Let me assure you that the world is not ending, but a bipartisan effort in the best interests of our military members is beginning.

My staff and I in conjunction with members of Governor Bob Riley's legislative staff have composed legislation that will enable us to provide electronic internet voting for Alabama's military and overseas voters for the first time in history. Alabama has an opportunity to expand democracy to our citizens across the globe and around the world.

Alabama has an opportunity of being the first state in the country to offer this type of electronic voting to its military and overseas citizens via the internet. This will omit the issue of not having adequate time for the process of absentee ballots to be delivered via the Postal Service to those living and serving overseas and constantly moving from country to country.

Obviously, legislation will have to be passed in order for this to occur and I have recruited bipartisan support in an effort to make this happen.

Senate Bill 431 was introduced by Sen. Larry Dixon last week and has already come out of committee with a unanimous bipartisan vote and it has already received one half of the House of Representatives' signatures as co-sponsors. Representative Duwayne Bridges will sponsor it in the House which will represent our overseas citizens:

- 19,029 of which are uniformed service members and 27,209 family members
- 56,315 overseas citizens (peace corps. missionaries, embassy workers, etc.)

For a total of 102,553 Alabamians living and serving overseas.

The bipartisan support for this bill is as diverse as our military itself, of which 29% are of minority status.

I appreciate the bipartisan support this legislation has received from Gov. Riley, Lt. Gov. Folsom, Senate Pro Tem Mitchem and others.

Our military is bipartisan and our investment in their right to vote must be bipartisan. It is only fair to give the very men and women who protect our right to vote, the right to cast their own. Anything else would be a slap in the face of Democracy.

I want to thank Gov. Riley for his long-term commitment to the military, his support of this legislation and his commitment to the people of this state to support the military's right to vote.

I want to thank Lt.Gov. Folsom, Senate Pro Tem Mitchem for their kind and gracious support and their commitment to help make this endeavor a success. This is Alabama's opportunity to expand democracy to our citizens across the globe and around the world and to become a flagship state in support of our military.

At this time, I would like to ask these gentlemen to say a few words.